

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, April 28. 1694.

Quest. 1. **I** Some time since met with the following Paper, and on Enquiry find the Matter of it to be true, and that there is, or lately was, one Robert Cook, Esq; living at Ipswich, in the same manner that this Paper supposes, without eating any thing that has Life in't, drinking Wine, &c. He's accounted a very rich Man, and of great Learning. I desire your Judgment concerning his manner of Life, and the Account he gives of it?

The Paper follows:

Several Questions asked of Robert Cooke, What is his Religion? and why he doth not eat Fish, Flesh, Milk, Butter, &c. nor drink Wine nor Beer (but Water) nor wear Woollen Cloaths (but Linnen) and by him Answered, as followeth.

Query 1. **W**hat Opinion or Belief are you of? And what is your Religion, seeing you are not of any Sect or gathered People?

Ans. I am a Christian, and a Protestant (a) and my Religion is to fear God (b) and to keep his Commandments, (c) to keep my Soul undefiled from the worldly evil Nature: (d) I abhor the Evil, and love the Good, (e) and have fellowship therein with all in every Sect, or gathered, or scattered Peoples.

Query 2. By what Rule is it possible to keep God's Commandments, whereby the Soul may be kept undefiled?

Ans. (1) By the manifestation of the Spirit of Christ, a measure of it being given (to me and) to every man (to be by it guided) to profit withal (2) this is that Law of the Spirit of Life in man, which Reproves for Sin, and leads into all Truth. (b) It Reproves for every vain Thought, and every evil Inclination, before it can come into bad Words or wicked Works: (i) And as this divine swift Witness, the Principle of Life is hearkened to, and the Soul takes heed, watching continually to it, to receive Power (k) and being obedient thereunto, abstaining from every Appearance of Evil: It saves Man from committing of Sin, because he is born, and led, and preserved by the Spirit of God (viz.) Christ Jesus, which is the Power of God (in man) which overcometh and keepeth from, and leads out of all Evil Inclinations.

Query 3. Why do you deny your self to kill any Animal Creature, and not to eat Fish, Flesh, Eggs, Butter, Cheese, Milk, or any Animal, or the produce of any Animal; your Food and Rayment you use being of nothing but only the Produce of Vegetives, that groweth, or may grow in the Country where you live, as Corn, Herbs, Roots, and Fruits of Trees, &c. or Preparations of Corn and Water for your Food; and your refusing to drink Wine or strong Drink, only Water for your Drink, and Linnen (or other Vegetives) for Cloaths?

Ans. (1) Let every man do as he is is perswaded in his own mind, (to as it be Innocent, and not Sin:) and my Practice in doing according to my Conscience and Belief, that I ought not to Kill, is very innocent and harmless; which cannot give any just offence to any man, nor other Creature. And my strict Rule in it (m) keeping out of Wrath and Violence (n) brings me forwarder on my way to keep my Conscience void of offence, towards God and towards Man: (o) And where-as I cannot Kill without wounding my Conscience, in acting against my mind, doing doubtingly, condemned in my very Thoughts; (p) therefore rather than I will offend that Innocent Life in me, I refuse any Food or

Rayment that may come from any Beast, or other Animal Creature. (q) And because Wine and strong Drink are hot in operation, and intoxicating, and I think as needles as Tobacco (to me) (r) and I by experience, finding that Water for Drink, and pulse (viz.) Corn (and other Vegetives) for Food and Linnen (or other Vegetives) for Rayment is Cleanest and whollomest, and Warm and Strengthening, and Nourishing, and Healthful; I chuse to use them, and so am cleared from most of the Cumber, Labours and Toils, both of body and mind, a few things being sufficient in this my Way of Living, and brings e hily into Contentedness, and true Thankfulness to God.

Eusebius his Writing relates, that the holy Apostle, called, James the just, the Brother of our Lord, eat not Fish nor Flesh, nor drank Wine nor strong Drink, nor wore Woollen Cloaths, but Linnen.

Contemplations.

O GOD, when I consider the Admirable Powers of Life and Sense which is in the Fish, and Birds, and Beasts, and all other Animal Creatures; and that all the Men in the World could not give the like being to any thing, nor restore that Life and Sense which is once taken from them, that thou the Lord of All hast given them, I have been apt to think that surely thou didst intend a more Innocent kind of Food to Man (Gen. 1. 29.) than such as must be taken with such Detriment to those Living Parts of thy Creation.

And the very same Consideration hath gone along with me in reference to the Labour of thy Creatures: I have thought that there was a certain degree of Justice due from Man to the Creatures; and that the Excessive, Immoderate, Unreasonable use of the Creatures labour is an Injustice for which he must account.

To deny domestical Creatures their Convenient Food, to exact that Labour from them they are not able to perform; to use Extremity or Cruelty towards them, is a breach of that Trust under which the dominion of them was committed to us; and a breach of that Justice that is due from Man to them, and therefore I have esteemed it as part of my Duty. And it hath been my practice to be merciful to the Beasts, and have accordingly declined any Cruelty to any of thy Creatures, and as much as I might prevented it in others as Tyranny inconsistent with the Trust and Stewardship that thou hast committed to Man.

I have abhorred those Recreations and Sports that consists in Torturing of the Creatures, remembering that thou hast given us a Dominion over thy Creatures; yet it is under a Law of Justice, Prudence and Moderation, otherwise we should become Tyrants, not Lords-over thy Creatures.

And therefore those things of this Nature that others have practised as Recreations, I have avoided as SINS.

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Ans. "Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not — was the old Advice of the Apostle, tho' as before, 'tis only he who is weak that eateth Herbs, and the case is very different between us and the Primitive Christians. As to the Gentlemans way of Living, in the Question before us, we suppose it can be no Secret, now he has printed the Confession of his Faith and Practice; and therefore it won't be un-
civil

civil for every one to speak their Sense of it, tho' we fancy he's not like to make many Profelytes. In General, as to his Fancy about Meats, Drinks, &c. We know no great hurt in't, the Injury being to himself, if any, laying a greater Burden on himself in some respects, than all the Ceremonial Law, only he seems again to introduce that difference of Meats which Christ has taken out of the way. As to his other Practice, being of no Sect, or gathered People, if the meaning of it be that he communicates with no Church, nor ever any where receives the blessed Sacrament, as indeed he must not, if he's true to his own Principles, there is, we conceive, more mischief and danger in't, as we shall presently prove; nor can the Example of perhaps some one or two great Men excuse him.

We come now to the particular Consideration of his Questions and Answers, and if we can prove he proceeds on false grounds, and that those reasons won't hold, on which he founds his Practice, it will be no more than reason that he shou'd alter it, if he's yet alive, and continues in it.

As to his Answer to the first Question, *What Religion are you of?* to which he replies in the first Place, He's a Christian, even there we desire him not to think us uncharitable if we stop a little before we can get any further: An *Essene* indeed he may be, but whether a Christian, unless in a very large Sense, as *Justin Martyr* (if we are not mistaken) and some other of the Fathers, lug in *Socrates* and *Plato* to Christianity, and some have made our Friend *Homer* little less. This must be granted, that a mans saying he's a Christian do's not make him so, any more than their saying they were *Jews* and were not, of old, did make 'em *Jews*; nor is living among professed Christians any more infallible mark, for this might serve *Atheists*, *Turks* and *Heathens*: A *Bramine* at least, wou'd be of the same Church with this Gentleman, for he believes in his one, *Almighty*, *Spider*, and wou'd frankly protest and own his Religion was to fear God, and to kill no, relieve all distressed Lice, Fleas, and lame Dogs, as well as this Gentleman. 'Tis but fair then to allow some *Criterion* of Christianity; Circumcision, Eating the Paschal Lamb, and observing the Law of *Moses* was the mark of the *Jews*, the same Circumcision with the Law of *Mahomet* of the *Turks* receiving several Traditions of the *Pharisees*, abstaining from several Meats, living in Community, &c. of the *Essenes*: Consequently a Christian must be distinguish'd by some marks, Baptism, the other Sacrament, and being a follower of Christ, and observer of his Doctrine, at least as far as outward profession. He therefore who lives in the neglect of such an usage as Christ has made a particular distinguishing mark of his followers, for example, the Sacrament of the *Eucharist*, whereby they own themselves Members of the same Body, and him their Head, who has commanded 'em, *To do this in remembrance of him*, whereby they are to shew forth the *Lords Death till he come*, how can such a one as this, with any propriety of Speech be call'd a Christian? And wou'd the Fathers or Martyrs of old have thought him so, had he liv'd among them, and not bin present at their Assemblies, or communicated with them? But he pretends to be more than a Christian of one side, tho' he seems a great deal less than the other — He'll be more holy than our Saviour, who there's little doubt to be made, drank Wine, and ate Flesh, being commonly present at Feasts when invited, and of whom 'tis expressly said in several Places, that he did eat Fish, and once, with the addition of an Honey-Comb, the best Desert his Fortunes afforded him, tho' that the product of living Creatures; nay chose his Apostles, the most part, from Fishermen, whose Livelyhood 'twas before, and sometimes after to catch Fish, as well as Men, and he himself did more than once miraculously assist them in it, which wou'd he ever have done had he thought God had intended a more innocent kind of Food to men, as this Gentleman even in his Prayers, tells him?

As to his second Question, by what Rule 'tis possible to keep Gods Commandments, and the Answer

to it, by hearkning to the motions of the Spirit, being obedient to it, &c. This in a sound Sense is true, but in an *Eusebustical*, perfect whimsie. Gods holy Spirit acts rationally, and works by means, not now without 'em, at least not usually, for that wou'd be a Miracle. This Spirit can never dictate any thing contrary to what *Jesus* has taught, for 'tis the Spirit of Christ (and therefore distinct from him, not the same with him:) Now Christ as before has bid us, *Do this in Remembrance of him*; But what Spirit is that which bids us not do it? Our own at least, if not a worse, and how dangerous is it to attribute that to him which is directly contrary to what we are sure he has commanded? And how shall Spirits be tried but by the Scriptures of Truth? This we have bin the longer on, because we think it a dangerous Error, and have shown our Reasons why we think so.

As for the third Question, Why you kill no Animal, nor eat Fish, Flesh, Milk Eggs, or the product of any Animal, &c. You answer, let every man do as he's perswaded in his own mind, that's true, if, as you say, it be innocent. Tho' 'tis no wisdom to be thus brought in bondage, besides that such a practice almost unavoidably throws those who use it on cursing those who do not, nor ought men to be stubborn in any such odd fancy; but consider the reasons brought against it, and the weakness of their own arguments. The chief of what you say, is, that by this Rule, not killing any Creature, (Louse, Flea, &c.) you keep out of Wrath and Violence. But is the Butcher, think you, in wrath with the Lamb or Calf when he kills it, or the good Wife with her Poultry when she wrings their Necks off? There's no consequence at all in the argument. No more than the next, *because I can't kill without wounding my Conscience*, therefore you will not wear any Raiment, or eat any Food, that come from them: But sure you may do this without killing 'em, nay with kindness to 'em, for do's not every one know that the Sheep languishes unless shear'd, and is a great deal the better and livelier for't, as a man for being slav'd, &c. Wou'd not the Cows Udder break if not milke, or at least the milk be lost, which is sure a greater Sin than eating it; and so of Eggs, for the Hen can't hatch a quarter of those she lays. You're not for Wine, or strong drink, because 'tis hot, and will intoxicate you. But Roots are windy, Fruits are crude: Nay, Corn and Water, if you eat too much on't will soon break your Belly, just as Wine will fuddle you. Nay, you ought not to eat without a rare Microscope, for not only Vinegar but Water has thousands of living Creatures in't, at least the Seed of 'em, and if you'll be sure to eat nothing that lives, you must come to grafs, as the *Essenes* when excommunicated.

For St. *James*, if that be true of him which *Eusebius* (and St. *Jerom* too) quote out of *Egesippus*, it's plain that he was a *Nazarene*, for he says, "he was holily from his Mothers womb; nor can his practice be drawn into Example, any more than that of kneeling till his Knees were as hard as Camels."

As for your mercy to Beasts, 'tis very commendable, and what God expressly requires, but no great matter of Piety or Merit in't, for the Heathen *Bramines* do the same. For your argument, in your Prayer, against Flesh, that God intended a more innocent Food, you forget he expressly granted the use of Flesh to *Noah*, and as before, what's this to Cheefe and Milk?

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